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Subject: Heart-Conviction.

# PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

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OF

## SERMONS

PREACHED BY

### HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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# HEART-CONVICTION.

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“For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.”—ROM. x., 10.

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I do not say that the design of the Apostle was to discriminate between the convictions of the feelings and the convictions of the intellect; and yet, this is involved in the declaration. *The heart* stands, in the Bible, for *feeling*—particularly for affections and moral emotions; and the declaration here, which is literally true—*man believeth with the heart*—I shall employ for the purpose of showing that it is not intellectual apprehension, that it is not conviction by the mere force of fact and reasoning, that determines men's faiths and beliefs.

It is a prevalent error that believing is purely an intellectual phenomenon, and that only facts and arguments are required to produce conviction. It is supposed that when facts are clearly stated, and when upon them, or upon other suitable grounds, arguments are honestly and wisely constructed, the understanding ought to yield, like a beleaguered city—that it has been fairly taken when it has been breached with argument and with facts. And yet, nothing is more certain, and nothing is more a subject of remark, than, if you adopt the old phrase,

“A man convinced against his will  
Is of the same opinion still.”

Men hear satisfying arguments all their lives long, and cannot get away from them; and in words they assent to the truth; and yet they do not believe one word of the truth. Nor can they tell why. Sometimes it is said to be because they are perverse and willful. They frequently think that it is not so—that they desire to feel as others feel, and to see as others see. But a conviction of the truth does not come to them from preaching.

Many suppose that the whole duty of a teacher is fulfilled in delivering his messages; that when he has put them into an intellectual form, when his propositions are marshaled and placed in regular and logical sequence, they are the best assailants of men. And yet, it is certainly true that many men are more fruitful as



preachers who have the least reasoning and the least logic in their preaching. It is true that some men, all their lives long, labor with a barren field, whereas, other men with not half their equipage nor half their munitions, and in more unfavorable fields, bring forth abundant fruit of convictions and of conversions.

There seems, therefore, to be something wrong in the theory of conviction—as to what it is, and what produces it. It is generally held that feeling has no proper place in the production of a conviction of the truth, but that it should be excluded; that the mind should be kept colorless and cold as the glass through which the scientist examines phenomena. And there are many who feel that every single appeal to the emotions, whether by illustration or otherwise, is the introduction of just so much of a disturbing force in the sacred process of ratiocination.

Now, in the lowest category of truth—that of material facts and events—it is true that the senses and the perceptive intellect do perceive truth without emotion. In regard to the examination of mere material facts, and the measuring of those facts according to any principle of measurement or classification which may be adopted, it is true that the less emotion there is, and the more pure perception there is, the more likely men will be to come at the truth.

But this is true only in regard to the lowest forms of *facts* of matter. The *relation* of facts of matter to each other develops or discloses a higher kind of truth. The relation of things to things, as of color to color, or of number to number, or of magnitude to magnitude—these are real; but they never can be perceived. They are thought of. They exist in the reflective intellect. They are therefore called truths of an abstract character, or philosophic truths.

In regard to these truths, also, it is certain that the less emotion there is, the more undisturbed will be that process by which, facts having been observed and coördinated, the relations of those facts, or the deductions of them, will be secured.

In the lower category of truth, then—that of facts of matter and their relations to each other—the emotions are a disturbing force in reasoning.

Thus far we have only considered the not unimportant, and yet the least important kinds of truths.

Rising above all other forms of organization, comes man himself; and while he stands upon the material globe, and is composite of material facts, he is also an originating center, organized with immense complexity. He has a force within him that not simply

grows, but thinks, wills, believes, loves, hates, rejoices, sorrows. There are desires, and contests, and beliefs in man, originating in himself, that matter never knows.

See a phenomenon! When the phosphorescent light shines out, is that a phenomenon? And is it not also a phenomenon when a man's mind thinks? When a branch divides, and then divides again, and again divides, joint from joint, and part from part, is that a scientific fact? And is it not also a scientific fact when the mind of a man now thinks, and now wills, and now feels, and in feeling experiences, first one kind of emotion, and then another kind? Are the things that are going on outside of a man, nature? and are not the things which are going on inside of a man just as much nature? If the lily that opens its silver cup on the tranquil lake is a phenomenon in nature, and is to be classified in botany; if the fruit that hangs pendant on the bough is worthy of a place in science, are not these inspirations and emotions, which grow upon a nobler stalk, and have a sweeter blossom, and a richer fruit, also worthy of a place in science? Are they not parts of nature, though they are evanescent, and changing, and repetitious? Are they not just as actually facts? If the lightning flashes out from the East and across the horizon, that is a fact; and if thought flashes out from the mind, is not that a fact just as important? Nay, higher in rank, and greater in importance are those truths which are evolved from man's nature according to the appropriate laws of evolution.

In man truth rises to a higher level than it attains in matter outside of man. It is no longer the mere relation of matter to matter. It becomes moral, affectional, æsthetic. That is, it is the truth of duty, it is the truth of feeling, it is the truth of beauty. Right or wrong, good or bad, true or false, homely or beautiful, lovable or repulsive, refined or vulgar—these are words, not for shadows, but for things. An emotion which takes on a distinct form; an intellectual experience which comes to a real shape—these are *things*, though they wear no body—though they have no continuing form. They are not only things really, but they are *superior* things, standing higher than lower organized matter which can be traced with the senses, and which therefore can be more conveniently handled by our lower reason. These truths, and hundreds of others, are just as real entities as weight, as dimension, as number, as distance, as color, or as any other quality, in matter.

Such truth is of transcendent importance to the individual; because what we call *character* is shaped more by these interior experiences and facts than by exterior influences, in many respects. It

is important to the family. It is the very law of development and of conservation in the household and in society. Moral truths, and social truths, and civil truths—these are higher organized; and on these it is that society is built; and on these society conducts all its processes.

It is then, on this higher form of truth—moral, social, affectional, æsthetic truth—that conviction depends, far more than on the presentation of reasons or dynamic qualities.

If you attempt to convince men that their course is right or wrong, you cannot do it as you would convince a grocer that his pound was under weight or over weight in the scales. There is no such measurable power. You are to address the feeling of right or wrong in men. It is generally complex. It is an emotion of complacency or displacency, as the old writers would have said, in one, two or more feelings in the soul. And no man is convinced in regard to any moral truth, until both the intellect and a certain number of the feelings are put at rest, in respect to it. It may address itself, first, perhaps to the intellect; but it must go deeper,—to the experience of moral feeling which is behind it. What is just, is not apprehended by reason of an intellectual statement of what it is, but from a peculiar experience of conscience. A thing is beautiful, not according to rules and statements, but according to an æsthetic experience in the man himself. And in regard to the higher truths, an emotion is evidence—feeling is reason. You cannot make a man laugh because he ought to laugh. You may analyze a jest, or a flash of wit, and present it to a man, saying, “Here are the elements of mirth; and these being presented to you as I now present them, if you are a rational being you will accept the statement of them, and laugh;” but nobody laughs so. People laugh first, and afterwards think why they laughed. The feeling of mirth is first excited; and afterwards the intellect analyzes that which produced the laughter. It converts into an idea that which was first an emotion or an experience.

And so in regard to every element of beauty or art, a man is not convinced of it by ratiocination. He is convinced of it by his feeling first; and then he brings in the understanding to corroborate the emotion, to heighten it, and to enlarge it.

And that which is true of art, is true of music, of eloquence, not only, but in the still higher range of moral conduct. True reasoning is that which makes a man *feel* that what you say to him is true. I do not care what the reasoning is, emotion is the means of the acceptance of the statement. A feeling of truth is an argument, though



it may be a lame one. If a man says in himself. "I feel, I know, that such and such a thing is true," that feeling is legitimate evidence to that man that the thing is true.

People say, "You ought to require men to present evidence of a good rational conviction, and then they will stand more permanently on the ground of belief. To address the feelings is to create a sudden transient conviction which may not have any permanence." There is some truth in that ; but, nevertheless, a man may attempt to produce a conviction by an intellectual process, and yet not produce that which amounts to a settled belief. Many men have been bombarded all their life, and have not been taken, because it was attempted to convince them purely by the intellect, the æsthetic and emotive elements being left out of the question. Hundreds of men have all their life long fought against the doctrine of divine sovereignty, as presented in a purely intellectual proposition, have heard it stated over and over again, and have tried to believe it ; but never did believe it until at length there came a presentation of it emotively, and imaginatively, when by some illustration there was kindled in their mind a sense of the sweetness and beauty of Fatherhood in God. And then, when once a conviction of that Fatherhood had entered into their soul, there came a desire that One possessed of such an attribute should be supreme, and have liberty to do as he pleased. And instantly there was a conviction produced which all the reasoning in the world would not have made. And were not these men soundly convinced because they were convinced through their taste and affection ? Were they not convinced, because it was an illustration rather than an argument that appealed to them ? That which makes a man feel that truth is truth, that right is right, is to him evidence. That which makes a man feel inside, "This is true," is evidence for him. And though such evidence is more or less imperfect, it is evidence.

Therefore evidence is sometimes intellectual, as respects the lower forms of truth ; but as you go up in the importance of truth, the evidence of it becomes less and less purely intellectual and factual. It becomes more and more emotional. It is taste, it is fear, it is hope, it is conscience, it is æsthetic inspiration, that determine whether men will take this, that or the other view of truth. So that the magazine of evidence is to be found, not in the lower forms of reasoning, but in appeals to the moral consciousness, to the conscience, to the emotions. And then, when men are alive or sensitive, and there is the presentation of a proposition or a quality of truth to the feelings, there will be found in them a response that convinces them, and settles the conviction.

This is to be followed up afterward by intellectual instruction, and by a process of investigation, to see whether the conviction is founded on good reasons, or on reasons not loosely stated. And then they will not only be convinced, but will be permanently convinced, and convicted, and converted, in so far as belief is concerned.

It is not, therefore, a small nor an accidental truth that is declared when it is said that *with the heart man believeth unto righteousness*; or, in other words, that the convictions which go to produce what are considered a moral and religious life, are convictions which spring mainly from the emotions, from the moral sentiments, from the taste, from the inspirations of feeling, and are not purely intellectual, dogmatic convictions—though these are not, in their place, to be despised. It is not dogma that anybody should object to: it is *despotic* dogma. It is not dogma that men should repudiate: it is *dogma making believe that it is the only form which truth can assume*. The hateful thing about it is that dogmas, which are a reduction of truth to intellectual statements of facts, or abstract truths, have usually assumed that they were the highest forms of evidence, and of the most authority; whereas universal experience shows, that while they are beneficial, they are practically of secondary importance in producing living belief in regard to the highest truth.

From the ideas enumerated in these views it is, that we see how men who are substantially of the same feelings, run generically toward the same general convictions. In any age the feelings and the affections of the age have much to do with the adoption of the philosophies and the politics of that age. If men are living by their lower nature, they will tend toward wantonness of intellectual philosophies; they will incline to the things that relax restraint, that break down responsibility, and untone the conscience. And, on the other hand, good men, pure men, men under the influence of a high degree of moral culture, in any age, will always tend to unity, on the ground of virtue and self-restraint, and responsibility, and refinement. And in any age the feeling that belongs to men in masses, largely determines the direction which they take in intellectual, religious and political philosophy.

Men may differ very largely in regard to moral and religious truth, and yet be honest; and to a degree both sides that differ may be true. One man may be an Arminian—honestly and thoroughly an Arminian; another man may be a Calvinist—honestly and thoroughly a Calvinist; they may stand apparently at antipodes; and yet they may both be right.



What! is it possible for men to stand on two sides of a common truth, and yet be right? No, not if either of them is wholly right; not if either of them has in himself the perfection of truth; but no man ever sees the whole truth. Nobody ever sees truths except in fragments. A truth is so much and so large that one man may be on one side, and see his share of it, and another may be on the other side, and see his share of it; and both of them may be right, though both of them are imperfect. They may be partialists, each of them *is* a partialist; but their views of that truth may not be false.

Where, for instance, a man has a sense of government; where, as a certain school would say, self-esteem and the feeling of authority are largely developed in a man, he will sympathize with the ruling force, and will be a Calvinist. Where, on the other hand, a man has benevolence very large, and his social feelings are in the ascendancy, he will sympathize with the governed, and not with the governing power; and he will be an Arminian. And both of them will be right; because there is an element of truth in both views. There are few who are large enough to take the whole of one side and the whole of the other side of the truth. One takes one element, and runs away with it, and organizes around it; and another takes another element, and runs away with that, and organizes around it. And both of them have something of the truth, though neither of them has the whole of it. The largeness of the truth is lost in the case of each; but each is sincere in his system of theology. Each has a philosophy of religion which is different from that of the other, and each is true to himself and his convictions, and each does good in one way or another. Each is part right and part wrong. They are both partialists.

We each take a mouthful of truth out of the whole; but none of us takes the whole of it. So that men may be generically united, but specifically different in their judgments of truth.

Take a familiar instance. In a given neighborhood are twenty husbandmen. They may all be good husbandmen. They may all carry on farming profitably. They may all be said to have a wise method of treating the soil and of treating crops. And yet, every one of them will treat his soil differently from every other, and every one of them will handle his crops differently from every other. But generically they agree, though specifically they vary. They are united in the general results which they are aiming to work out; but they are not united in the special methods by which they are to be brought about. And yet nobody thinks of putting them by the ears because specifically they disagree, when generically they agree.

It is not probable that in any street or neighborhood any two

householders keep house alike. They may all be respectable people, they may all be good housekeepers, they may all be bringing up their families well; and yet, they all differ in their modes of doing these things. They rise at different hours, and have their meals at different hours, and spread their tables differently, and cook their food differently, and bring up their children differently, and manage their servants differently, as you would learn, if you could hear them talk about each other. Nothing would be more instructive than to hear the housekeepers in a neighborhood discuss each other's economy. Each is careful in some direction, and profuse in another; and each criticizes the others' profuseness. But economy is a question of final results, and not of special methods. All through different households you find disagreement in specifics and agreement in generics.

Now, throughout the world, churches are artificial households. And many of them are good households. There are sects, scores of them, as there ought to be; and though they specifically differ, they are generically promoting good morals, inspiring spiritual appetites, and lifting men up from the plane of the passions to the plane of the moral sentiments. They are teaching men to live, not by sight, but by faith. And one does it in one way, and another does it another way. One does it by ordinances and symbols, another by silence and by the teaching of the Spirit, and another by intellectual disquisitions. And so there is some general unity between them, though they are running in their own ruts and channels.

A man's feeling has much to do with what he believes; and it is from what is inside of a man, and not from what is outside of him, that we are to determine what the truth is. There is belonging to every man a personal element, which to a very great degree has been overlooked, but which is of vital importance—certainly to the charitable judgments which we form of men.

We know that in scientific processes—that is, in dealing with the lower forms of truth—different men are equipped not only with different powers of eye, and different sensibilities of ear, and different aptitudes of nature, but that a distinct judgment is taken of these things. In measuring transits, in attempting to perform the more delicate operations of making observations in astronomy, it is found that one eye is more sensitive than another; that one eye acts quicker and sees quicker than another when a planet touches the limb of another planet. And these individual peculiarities are reduced to mathematical expression. Astronomical observers have what are called their "personal equations"; and in every observatory in Europe you will find that allowance is made for the peculiarities of persons in the matter of seeing, and that their personal

equations are used to correct and regulate the results of their observations.

Now, moral astronomy has some need of personal equations—though they have never been applied, and though it would be very difficult to apply them; for what men believe depends very much on how they are made. And it is absurd to talk about people believing alike. I believe as you do? No. Nobody believes as I do, because nobody is made as I am. The elements which enter into the composition of the human mind are not mixed in precisely the same proportions in any two persons. No two men have the same sensibility or the same training. No two men are precisely alike. All have the same faculties; the alphabet goes into everybody; but the letters—the A B C's—are put together differently, and the words are spelled with infinite variations in different persons. And not only are they in different proportions, and in different degrees of strength, but sometimes one predominates and sometimes another, in the same person. Sometimes the moral feelings are first, and sometimes the social affections, and sometimes the intellectual powers. These qualities exist in different persons with infinite variations and combinations. What a man sees when the truth is presented to him depends entirely on the strength of the qualities that are in him, on the proportions in which they exist, and on the relative degrees of sensibility which they have at the time.

The impressions which come to the consciousness of different persons are not the same. The impressions which come to your consciousness and mine, if you could see and measure them, would materially differ. The character of men's moral structure has much to do with determining their convictions. And the attempt to make all men see and feel the same things is just as preposterous as it would be to make the mark of one man's foot in the sand, and attempt to compel everybody else's foot to fit that mark exactly. Stakes have been driven, flames have been kindled, racks have been turned, and blood has flowed out by Amazons, in that which nature abhors, and the race abhors, and God abhors—the attempt to make all men believe the same things in the same way. It has been sought to run men in molds, as it were, so that they should come out as dollars from a die. But men are made on the principle of infinite and eternally increasing variations. And beliefs, though they agree generically, vary specifically—and must and will do so. Truth will be truth, right will be right, goodness will be goodness, of course. In general directions they are the same, though they differ in minor points.



In traveling on the prairies of the West, when we came to a slough, or morass, we would find fifty roads branching out; and one preferred to go in and out on one side; another preferred to pass through, a few yards from a certain point; another preferred to cross at some other point; but I noticed that the main idea was, for everybody to get through the slough, though they did it by almost as many roads as there were travelers across the prairie, during certain weeks and months of the year. Of course, all roads were not equally easy and equally good; there was a choice of ways; but every man took the liberty of going the way he thought the best.

And so it is in respect to variations of belief. Men follow their subjectivity. They follow that particular form of belief which springs from conviction of feeling in them. If human influence and power could have made men alike, and kept them alike, in belief, it would have been done; but that was not in accordance with the divine decree. It seems to have been designed that every man should have a personal experience of his own; and that while all should maintain right directions, and cultivate a true moral character, and be united generically, they should specifically not lose their individuality or separateness.

This is the fundamental difference between Protestantism and Catholicism. Catholicism does not mean Pope, nor Cardinal, nor this ceremony, nor that creed. The question involved is simply this: Is the individual at liberty to follow the charter which he finds in himself, or must he follow a charter which is prescribed by human authority? Catholicism says that every man's conscience must agree with the Church's conscience. It says that there is a great unitary conscience, and that every man must be guided by that. But Protestantism says that every man has a right to his individual conscience. It holds that he ought to instruct it so that it shall be a fit and reliable guide. And it makes every man responsible for that to which his conscience leads him. According to Protestantism, when it comes to the issue, no man has a right to follow any other conscience than his own. And when a man says, "I must follow my conscience," he is a Protestant.

I had the pleasure of seeing Father Hyacinthe when he was here, and telling him that he was a Protestant. He had just been saying, "I cannot be unfaithful to the truth as it has been delivered to me." "Stop!" said I, "you are a Protestant, and out of the Church." He had said that he could not bear to go out of the Church; that he dreaded schism, or heresy; that it was like poison to him. Nevertheless he *was* a Protestant. When a man says, "I must follow my God according to the light which *I* have," that

moment he is a Protestant. And I think Christ's own ideal of a man was a *man*: not merely a member of the human family, but an organized *man*.

This will lead to many collisions, many mistakes, many imperfections. But tell me of anything that is not full of imperfections. This world is not a perfect sphere, and it does not turn out perfect work. It is a world in which we are taking preliminary steps.

"When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away."

So says the apostle. He understood, as well as anybody else, that men are all partialists. Paul, the great theologian, after many years of thought, and visions, and rapturous associations, and after, to his own seeming, having been lifted up to the seventh heaven, declared that he saw things fragmentarily.

"When that which is perfect is come [the whole of truth], then that which is in part [the partial view] shall be done away."

And not till then will it be done away.

We are certain, then, that truth is in many special, minor respects different to different men. Love, mercy, justice, authority, responsibility, freedom—these, on the palette of a man's consciousness are not simple uncompounded colors. They are made up of many colors. They have a great variety of tints. They differ endlessly in their shadings.

There will be objections raised to these views. "Why pay any heed," men say, "to facts and arguments, if belief is subjective, if it belongs to the subject himself, and arises from the way in which he is constituted?" Because, in many respects we are constituted alike—or proximately alike. Though we vary in specials, we agree in generals. And facts, to multitudes of men, are in many respects substantially the same. At any rate, the general exterior is the same. And although we may attach shades of difference to them, and they may work themselves out in the final result, there are enough points of agreement to make men cohere; to unitize them.

But, "May not this view," it is asked, "imply that truth is variable; that it is to every man just what he sees it to be? Is there nothing permanent? Is everything shifting according to the imaginations of men? Is there no solid ground? Are there no firm foundations? Is there no exact truth? Is there no order which a man having, *has*, and can stand on, and be at rest?" I do not know of any. The whole creation has been groaning and travailing in pain until now, and never has found it. You can come to a degree of exactitude in respect to material mensuration—in respect to gravity, or heights, or depths, or lengths, or breadths; but in regard to moral things the world has never more than approximated com-

mon beliefs. And the peculiar traits of nations and races and individuals remain; in spite of every argument to the contrary, in spite of prayers, in spite of all the influences which have been brought to bear against it, the world is just as it always was—only more so. That is, as intelligence and knowledge increase, men grow toward diversity as fast as they grow toward unity.

It is with truth as it is with trees. The part that stands in the ground is a solid unit—the trunk; but the part which deals with the sun, and therefore has in it the principle of life, is forever branching, and branching, and branching. And if a tree hates anything, it is a straight stalk. It wants to bend and turn here and there. And so it goes on splitting and dividing. But does it injure the tree? Does the fruit grow on the twigs, or on the solid part? You know that it is found not on the unit, but on the diverging twigs. The power of truth lies in diversity, and not in unity. In great basilar developments, unity; in the higher elements, ramification.

But it does not follow that truth is a thing of mere individual segregation, as persons have it nowadays. It is not simply my personal experience. My personal experience reproduces a certain amount of that great truth which lies outside of me, and of the race, and of angels—and that is God. I am not able to reproduce the whole of the truth in nature, nor of God in human kind. The truth is complex, and it transcends the bounds of the ordinary consciousness.

Therefore truth is stable and firm, though my share of it may be but little, and though as compared with another man's share it is mutable and variable. Truth is a great substantial entity which lies outside of us all. Our consciousness takes in but a part of it, and a changing, mutable part, at that: but this does not void the stability of the unity of the truth of the universe.

Is a man responsible for his beliefs; were they not created in him and for him? I do not think a man is responsible for his *beliefs*; but I think a man is responsible for his *conduct*. You can get at it just as you please. *The heart* it is that *believes unto righteousness*. You are responsible for being good, and true, and manly, and believing, and loving, and noble in every way. You are responsible for results. Every man is responsible for being honest with himself. A man is responsible to this extent—that he must keep his mind clear. If when I look at a color it is blue to me, I am not responsible for seeing that color blue, though another man may see it green. But if the color, being blue to me, I look at it and say that it is green, I am responsible for a violation of



honesty. Men are responsible for using truly, and under the best conditions, every faculty they have ; and when I am true to my organization, when I am true to that which is within me, I am not responsible for the products of that which my mind sees. Conduct and character are results. Believing is merely a preliminary stage. It is a means to an end. And experience shows that men do by different beliefs come to the same general results. That is to say, are there not men in the other churches who are as good Christians as though they were Congregationalists ? There are. I am beholden to many Christians of past generations in the Roman Church for their learning and piety and nobility. I see in the Episcopal Church, saints with bishops' caps upon their heads. And are there not just as good men in the Methodist Episcopal Church as there are in the old Episcopal Church ? Certainly. And have there not been Christians of the right stamp from the days of John Calvin to the present time in the old Presbyterian Church ? Unquestionably. Are there not true and good men in every denomination where Christianity has been developed ? Yes. Every man who is really God-fearing and man-loving has that for which alone belief has any value. The object of believing is to produce goodness.

Now, if from every diverse point, if from convictions which vary in each man, one can reach forth with his heart, though it be small at the bottom, and big at the sides, and flat at the ends, and *believe unto righteousness*, that is enough. The thing is *righteousness*, That is the fruit, according to the declaration of the Master.

When John sent to Christ, being discouraged in his prison life, saying, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" in that same hour Christ performed many wonderful works ; and he said to the disciples who had come from John, "Go"—what ? tell John that this is my doctrine ? tell John that I am the Messiah ? tell John that I have fulfilled all the prophets ? tell John that I am co-equal with the Father ? Not a word of it—"Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see : the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them."

It is as if he had said, "Go tell him that the fruit is the thing, and that is enough."

A man who lives in a spirit of love to God, and of unfeigned charity toward his fellow men, is, under God, a Christian ; and that is right-believing, or valuable believing, which makes right-living.

But does not this undervalue truth ? Oh, no. If you ask me what is the likelihood of certain beliefs generating holy lives ; if

you ask if there are not some modes of presenting the truth, certain proportions, and certain systematic forms, which experience determines to be more effectual in producing right characters than others, I reply, Yes, I think there are. Therefore I think it more important that a man should believe right, and not simply believe. And that makes it important that a man should be educated to believe in certain views. I hold that some forms of belief are better than others, because some forms of belief tend to produce better results than others. But, at the same time, where I see that right results have been produced, I recognize them as being right, no matter what produced them. The object of truth is the production of goodness ; and if goodness is evolved, that is the main thing, no matter how it was produced.

When the master gives to a class a proposition in Euclid, it may be that Euclid's solution is the best that can be given ; nevertheless, if a scholar does not take to that solution, and gets at the result by some original development of thought, the master accepts it, although he may have taken a long road, and an imperfect one, to come to it. If he solves the problem, he has accomplished the thing which was to be done. There is a difference between a long and a short road ; but if the long one carries a man home at last, that is the main thing.

Now, of theologies, some seem to run on a level plain, and the shortest distances ; and some take circuits through the wilderness or the morass ; and a man has much more weariness, and a great deal longer journey if he takes the latter than if he takes the former ; but any theology that takes a man home to Heaven is sufficiently good.

We see from these views, if they are correct, why it is that men find in the Bible such different teachings. It is because in going to the Bible each man carries with him his peculiar disposition and taste, and takes those truths which are most in harmony with his strongest part.

Did you ever see iron separated from sand by a magnet ? You go and pick out the iron with your hands, guided by your eyes. You are proud of what you are pleased to call your grand organization. I hear much of the dignity of human nature. With your superior faculties pick out those particles of iron if you can. It is a long and wearisome task, and is but imperfectly done at best. Now take that magnet—that crooked piece of iron without an eye in its head by which to see—and draw it through and through the sand, and it will gather up every single particle of the iron.

Every man's predominant faculty is a magnet. One man's

magnet is love; and when he draws it through the Bible, every element that attaches to the question of love sticks to it. When he reads the Bible, he is no logician and no philosopher, and he does not care about reasoning; but he says, "Ah! how anybody can read the Bible and not see that it is all love, I cannot understand."

His neighbor has been reading the same Bible, but he has gone through it with the magnet of conscience, and there is nothing but justice that sticks to it. He says, "You need not tell me about the kingdom of God being a kingdom of love; it is a kingdom of justice, *justice*, justice." And he holds every man responsible for exact right and wrong. "Why, it is just as plain as it can be," he says. "Nothing but willful depravity, nothing but *total* depravity, could keep a man from seeing that the Bible teaches that God is a God of justice."

Another man has a magnet, and he draws it through the Bible, and says, "How any man dare talk so familiarly of the Creator is a mystery to me! God is an awful, *awful*, awful being!" It is all veneration with him. All through the Bible he has found the element of veneration.

Another man has a magnet, and, smiling and rejoicing, he draws it through the Bible; and out comes a rainbow; out come beautiful bunches of flowers; out come dripping clouds; out comes delightful music; out comes all that is bright and glorious; and he says, "Why, God is a God of beauty! All through the Bible is beauty."

And so every person takes the strongest faculty in himself, and makes a magnet of it, and goes through the Bible, and takes out that element which is in affinity with it.

Well, is there any harm in this? No, not if you understand that one takes one element of truth, and another another, and another another; not if you understand that one really does find in the Bible love, and another justice, and another beauty, and another veneration. Every one of these things can be found in the Bible; but nobody takes them all. Each man who goes there is a partialist, and takes his own predominant faculty, and draws out what naturally adheres to that.

The reason why there are so many sects, is that men see different sides of the truth, according to the faculties by which they are controlled. There would not be so many sects if men would let each other alone, and not insist upon that part of the truth which they have discovered being the only truth; but man takes a single element of truth, and attempts to compel others to accept that as the sum total of truth. The man of conscience says, "You shall come to my school"; and the man of love says, "I won't." "You *shall*!"



"I *won't*!" "You *shall*!" "I *won't*!" And so there is contention between the adherents of justice and benevolence; and each one feels that it is of infinite importance that men should believe right, and says, "If they will not believe right, I will *make* them." That has been the motto of the Church—"If a man will not believe right, *make* him." Men have been straw, and priests have been husbandmen, who have taken them on the floor of the church, and attempted to flail them to orthodoxy and true believing. It has been taught that men should be held to discipline and correct believing, and not be allowed to wander off from the true faith; and they have been dogmatized and despotized over, and it has been attempted to compel them to believe with the strongest.

Now, I hold to liberty. If your God seems to be pre-eminently a God of justice, I will not quarrel with you. Neither shall you quarrel with me because God seems to me more a Father than a King. Nor will I quarrel with another man to whom God is a God of beauty. I stand in the brotherhood of all those men each of whom has taken his strongest faculty and used it as a lens through which to look at and magnify a certain part of truth, which he is best fitted to see. I put my arms about them, and say, "My brothers, I need you all. I need to have more of justice, and more of love, and more of beauty. You build me up in the elements which you interpret, and I will build you up in the elements which I interpret."

Some astronomers are studying the nebulæ, some Jupiter, some Saturn, some the sun, and so on; and they bring together all the results of their investigations, and unite them; and the sum total makes the one astronomy.

The true Church is that which takes the gifts of all its members, and instead of quarreling with and persecuting and treading under foot each the peculiar views of any other, unites them as far as possible. The members of a church should say to each other, "You contribute your gifts to me, and I will contribute mine to you in return. And such a church, and such church-members, are the best interpretation of the ultimate condition of the one universal church.

God grant that we may have such honesty and simplicity and truthfulness that all that is right in us shall interpret God to us. And may we have humility. May we not suppose that we have found God out to perfection. May we have charity toward all men. And may we have such fellowship as to bind in confidence all, everywhere, who honestly call upon the name of the Lord.

## PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We draw near to thee, our Father, by thy Spirit, taught to call thee Father. This is that in thee which most we need. For though we need thine hand to sustain our body, and though we need to be filled with inspiration of thought from thee, most we need mercy and kindness and gentleness. All through our life we are for knowledge but as children. We need to be dealt with as a nurse dealeth with the babe. And, looking to thee, we rejoice that thy heart is paternal, and full of infinite mercy and goodness, and that we need not turn as from the darkness of the cloud and the storm, but that we may find in thee all cheer and all comfort and all gladness, and that so our life may be established in thine as from within it draws all its fullness.

We pray that thou wilt not, O Lord our God! look upon us as upon those around about thee who stand in primal innocence. Look not upon us according to the measure of thine own purity. Remember that we are but frail dust; and like as a father pitieth his children, so, Lord, pity us. And in thy great compassion strengthen us in our weakness. Humble us where we are over-swollen with pride, and comfort us if we be in affliction. Give us strength and patience that we may hold out through the longest day of darkness. And may we be saved by hope as well as by faith, discerning things unseen, and beholding things that are not, that we may be able to stand in the true world invisible and spiritual, though the outward world, material and fleshly, do fail us.

We pray, O Lord, our God! that thou wilt grant to every one in thy presence this morning the manifestation of thy Spirit, according to his need. Give understanding to those in darkness of mind. Give, we pray thee, apprehension of the truth to those that are in error. Grant to those that are burdened and bowed down, patience; and may they behold how the very trees themselves do symbolize their duty, that are bent with the weight of that water which, plunging to their root, gives them life again, and strength to lift up the bough, by and by, when the storm clouds shall have gone, and the sun shall shine.

We pray, O Lord! that thou wilt be near to all those who are in affliction. Speak to them words which they cannot imagine themselves. May they hear the voice of songs around about them, as if thy good spirits had descended to cheer and comfort them.

Grant thy blessing to rest upon all those who are perplexed as to duty; and to all that are in darkness and trouble in respect to their affairs; and to all that are in trouble and perplexity in regard to their relations among themselves. Enter into the secret experience; go in behind the veil; and grant that thy Spirit may so cleanse, and purify, and sweeten, and inspire, that every one may feel that it has been good to be with the Lord in his sanctuary this day.

Grant consolation to those that are in the presence of their dead. Support those that in fear and grief are with their sick, waiting for the time when they shall die. Be with all who with anguish remember past histories. Let not their sorrow be in over-measure. Grant that, though for a time it is grievous, it may work out in them, and that speedily, the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

We pray that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon all those that would fain be with us to-day, but are not gathered with us. Be with them in their houses, and homes, and closets, and hearts. May it be a day of rest to their souls. May it be to them a day of rejoicing in the Lord.

We pray for all that are this day scattered through our land, and in for-

eign lands, and upon the great deep. May the Spirit of the Lord be with them. And may their memories of the past be sanctified. And may the sympathies which come back from them to us bring the blessing of the Lord.

We pray that thou wilt grant thy blessing upon all that this day are laboring in word or doctrine. Be with those that go forth to make known the Gospel to the scattered and ungathered. Grant that those who are laboring with painstaking and self-denial may not be weary in well-doing.

Bless those, we pray thee, who are striving for a better life, and have parted from sin, and have come away from immorality. May they find the ground under their feet firm, and may they gain strength from day to day. May they be valiant and faithful in the cause of their new Master.

Let thy blessing may go abroad upon all those who are teaching—upon the school-masters and upon the school-mistresses in this land; and especially upon those who are in desolate places—upon those who have exiled themselves, and gone away from the sympathy of friends, that they may teach the poor and needy.]

Raise thou up more and more a kindly spirit among men towards those that are now in our midst, who must maintain their rights by intelligence and purity. Wilt thou incline the hearts of others toward them. And wilt thou draw them out of darkness and into light.

We pray for the schools and colleges and academies in our land. We pray for all those institutions which are for the discovery and for the diffusion of useful knowledge.

And we beseech of thee that thou wilt bless the nations of the earth. May they no longer, like the beasts of the forest, use their strength to rend and to tear. May the time come when nations shall help nations; when they shall stand around about each other, even as brothers and sisters are united in the household, in one body, that they may all help where each is deficient, and rejoice where each is strong. Make haste, we beseech of thee, and bring in that latter-day so long promised, and so long delayed. And may the glory of the Lord at last shine through all the earth.

We ask it for Christ's sake. *Amen.*

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### PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, wilt thou bless the word spoken, and may it be for our edification. May we be delivered from error, and purified in heart that we may believe more perfectly. May we trust in such truth as we have; and may we look forward to that more blessed day when imperfections and limitations shall have passed away, and when we shall be developed more, so that all the nobler and higher truths which now are beyond our vision or our imagination shall be made known to us. And then may we meet together to rejoice with one another with supreme love, and power, and truth, and justice, and goodness. And to thy name shall be the praise, forever and ever. *Amen.*



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